

How Recovery Coaches are managing lockdown through the Covid Crisis



2020

Our Recovery Coaches began their placements in late January 2020 and within 6 weeks , like everybody, their worlds were turned upside down. This is the remarkable story of how they have coped with our national lockdown. It is a story of resilience, imagination, generosity and great wisdom which will be an inspiration to anybody who reads it. Paul Duff, our coordinator, has kept the recovery coaching training and experience going and very much alive through the lockdown while simultaneously being re-deployed to work with the Covid 19 Homeless Response Team facing up to the challenge of working with a vulnerable group of people.

We have been very fortunate to have engaged Sandra Losty to support our recovery coaches and this set of stories is her brainchild.

“When crisis meets people in recovery you can be guaranteed that something beneficial comes from that interaction. It was my pleasure to work with this group of Recovery Coaches in a supporting capacity during the Covid 19 crisis to help them refresh the recovery coaching training material. It was quite humbling to see how much concern and care there was for each other while managing their own situations, very beautiful acts of recovery in action.

It was only because they were honest and open with each other about just how ‘lock down’ was impacting them personally, that this idea arose. As trained recovery coaches, who better than they themselves to support each other at this time and through their generosity of spirit it is no surprise that the question arose, if it helped them, could it help others?

They are truly, wonderful examples, of how to step up to the mark, in the middle of a pandemic.

I am honoured to have walked along side this group as they turned their own struggles into practical and accessible solutions for others.

The recovery space is richer for them.

Sandra

The Recovery Academy's Recovery Coaching programme is funded by the North East Inner City Programme Implementation Board.

We would like to thank our partner organisations who took on the role of hosting our Coaches on placement

Sankalpa	http://sankalpa.ie/
Chrysalis	https://chrysalisproject.ie/
Tallaght Rehabilitation Project	http://www.tallaghtrehabproject.ie/
Coolmine Therapeutic Community	https://www.coolmine.ie/
Soilse	https://bit.ly/SoilseHSE
Finglas Addiction Support Team	https://fastltd.ie/
Tolka River Project	http://tolkariverproject.ie/

We also wish to thank the HSE CHO9 Addiction Service for their continuing support of our activities.

Joe Barry

Chair

Recovery Academy of Ireland

Registered Charity Number 2015461



Twitter: @IreRecoveryAcad



<https://recoveryacademyireland.ie/>



Facebook.com/RecoveryAcademyIE/

Coaching ourselves through the Covid crisis

by Siobhan, Donna, Jackie, Declan, Stephen and Helen and Charles

The Recovery Coaches - Recovery Academy of Ireland.

As coaches we have been trained to coach people through situations that are challenging in their lives. We did not anticipate that we ourselves would need to pull on the skills we had just been trained in so soon after the training was completed.

Our workplace placements on services that support people with addictions have afforded us the experience of enriching the training, because we get to implement the skills every day. We can see first-hand people getting value from the support on offer from the services we are attached to.

No one could have predicted Covid-19 having the impact in our work and personal lives or indeed how the services we are on placement in are operating at the moment. We ourselves were thrown into disarray as our routines were disrupted severely and we were faced with managing ourselves within this difficult time. We were looking forward to learning more, growing more and deepening our work related skills for possible future employment.

It disrupted our learning curve, it disrupted the delivery of services and it disrupted the support the service users were receiving up to the restrictions being put in place for our safety and wellbeing. And so began the conversation between us just how the lockdown was affecting us. Some of us felt 'locked in' with our families and the stresses that can bring not having the time to do our individual things and some of felt 'locked out' because we could not see our families and friends.

This conversation helped us identify a few things that were impacting our recovery that if left unaddressed could have a negative impact on us personally, on our families and on our communities.

So with that in mind we decided "Coaches, coach your selves through the Covid 19 crisis". We have the skills, we have the people (ourselves) and we have the technology (zoom). It helped us maintain our coaching skills and help ourselves at the same time.

We had some common areas that we were struggling to manage on a daily basis and some areas that were unique to each of us and we thought we would share them with you in the hope that you might identify some small things you can apply that will help you to cope better through the Covid 19 crisis.

We not only were helping ourselves with this project but it filtered down to our children, siblings and friends as they were seeing how we were managing and dealing with the crisis. We knew they were looking to us for direction and reassurance so that they too could feel safe at this time.

We enjoyed putting this together and we hope in some small way some of these suggestions might work for you too.

Stay safe

The Recovery Coaches - Recovery Academy of Ireland.



Siobhan

Placement

Sankalpa

Impact of lockdown – Loss of routine and structure to the day

No sense of purpose

Feeling out of control

Things not getting done

Feeling frustrated

I noticed I was not managing small things as well as I wanted to. I felt irritable and missed my usual outlets to talk about these things. Everything seemed to annoy or bother me. I didn't want to feel like that. It was draining me. Now I had all the time in the world and I seem to be spending it on things that weren't actually helping me. I was looking at too much social media scare stories, looking at the updates on the death toll and feeling uncertain about what was fake news, or real news.

It all made me feel out of control and I could not connect with a sense of having any control at all.

So I said to myself "Coach, Coach yourself".

Having the coaching skills was a brilliant resource to have access to. They gave me focus and clarity on what I had control over and what I did not have control over. It was easy to see I was getting annoyed over things I could not change.

When I looked at what I could change I got a bigger sense of control over my own environment, I felt productive and I came to value the everyday things in a way I did not before. The Basics!

I'd like to share with you what my basics are and how I structure my day so that I manage 'Lockdown' better for myself and my family.

Siobhan

SIOBHAN'S

TOP 7 THINGS TO PLAN FOR EVERYDAY

ITEM 1

THE BASICS

As simple as it sounds but I make a conscious decision to have a shower, get dressed and have breakfast.



ITEM 2

NA MEETINGS

I factor in time to get a meeting online everyday. It's only an hour. Sponsor and sponsee chats are scheduled too



ITEM 3

HOME WORK. MINE AND THE KIDS

We are all out of study routine and course work is building up. Planning this work means we are not behind when we go back.



ITEM 4

EXERCISE

I know! Ordinarily I hate exercise but lockdown has forced me to get out and about more to fend off that feeling of being trapped

ITEM 5

MEALS & SHOPPING

The weekly shop. I have that planned to avoid missing the queues and its MORE exercise!



ITEM 6

LEISURE TIME

Keeping the kids entertained is challenging. Tik Tok videos have been a life saver.



ITEM 7

CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Making sure I connect with family and friends daily is important. Zoom is great but can't wait to see them all face to face



**There is no Just for Tomorrow Chip
So Do it today**



Stephen

Placement

Chrysalis

Impact of Lock down – Loss of motivation for course work

Battling Discouraging self-talk

Routine out the window

I was ticking along nicely with college work up until lockdown hit. I had a good routine of going to college, my placement, my meetings and I had enjoyable social activities that I looked forward to. They all came to a screeching halt with lockdown. It did not take long for my head to start telling me there was no point in doing the work because as each day passed it seemed more and more likely that college would not reopen before September.

I had access to the tutors but had no inclination to connect with them.

It was all too easy to just not do the work at all, turn on Netflix and just chill out which of course meant nothing got done and it all built up.

I do have a part time job where I help others keep social distance. I go there 3 days a week but that might change soon but I am delighted to have it. I miss being able to visit my family and I miss the face to face meetings. But it is important to follow the guidelines so I decided to put guidelines in for myself to address this issue.

I'd like to share with you what I have done to address this issue for myself in the hope it will help you to look at your motivation too. I know my college work will play a huge part in making me more employable in the field I want to get into it more as time goes on so I am making what I do today count for something important.

Stephen

HOW TO STUDY DURING LOCKDOWN



SELF TALK

Turn "There's no point in doing anything" into "My future is on the pages of these books"

MAKE A TIME TABLE TO STUDY

I break study time into 2 hour blocks 3 days a week.



MOBILE PHONE

Leave it outside the room - it's far too distracting

MEDITATION MUSIC

I listen to meditation music to slow my thinking down and get into the study zone.



PREPARATION

Putting all the notes out with the text books for the next session helps to feel prepared.

SPEAKING WITH TUTORS

Regular check ins with tutors and other students gives me the opportunity to seek clarity.



EDUCATION WILL OPEN EMPLOYMENT
DOORS FOR ME



Donna

Placement

Tallaght Rehabilitation Project

Impact of lockdown – Loss of routine around the kids

Finding interesting fun things for them

Feeling fearful about the future

I heard myself talking with my family and friends all about the fearful stuff to do with lockdown. It was all doom and gloom and pretty hopeless. It never dawned on me that actually I was doing all the right things to make sure myself and my family were as safe as possible.

We kept the social distance and as hard as that was we were doing it. It was difficult with the kids at the start but it made me think of other ways to keep them busy. We were always practising good hand hygiene and the kids got into the spirit of things making up their own song which made it a bit more fun for them. They adapted quicker than I did.

Once I realised everything was being done to keep us all safe I then had to have a conversation with myself about the dialogue I was having on the phone with my family and friends. My mother and sister have been a huge support to me and the relationship I have with them is one I treasure.

I wanted to make sure our conversations were not just about the fearful things but actually have conversations that were about us a family of people who love each other. I reassure them that they too were doing everything to keep themselves as safe as they could be.

But that still left entertaining the kids for most of the day and of course making sure I was looking after myself also.

I'd like to share with you some of the things in terms of recipes, fun games, affirmations and self-care that I have found that works that gets us all through the day while we are in lockdown.

Donna

Mom and Kids Lock In Plan

Donna's Tips

Mom care is as important as
keeping the kids busy



Exercise

Exercise routines keep us moving, laughing and a great way to spend time together without feeling we are on top of each other.



Baking

It's a challenge to bake
HEALTHY but we are getting there ish.



Contact

More than ever I am conscious to maintain contact with my mam and sister, my friends, sponsor and sponsees.



Planning is key

Leaving things chance is too risky. Making a plan of what needs to happen for the coming week, highlights the priorities.



Mindfulness & meditation

Making time for me so I can handle the rest. Saying affirmations as I meditate and connect to my higher self.

"Strength grows in the moments when you think you can't go on – but you keep going anyway"



Helen

Placement

Coolmine

Impact of lockdown – Miss seeing and hugging my daughter and the grandkids

Activities that help me manage stress like swimming and hopping on train to go or nice walks.

Miss not being able to go to church

I had missed some family birthdays which was one of the most challenging things about being in lockdown. Not being able to have the family visit and celebrate with a big hug. The human touch is so healing. Being in lockdown meant some of the most important things to me are now not accessible like just hopping on a train and going for walk along Bray seafront. I really enjoy swimming as a way to manage and offset stress but that too is now unavailable, at least for now.

I didn't like how I was feeling and needed to turn it around. What I have learned over the years is that I can self-care any time anywhere. So I took my own advice and looked at the self-care tips that have served me well over time.

No matter what is going on around me I can look after myself in many holistic ways that are accessible and easy to implement.

Self-care is something that can slip when we are out of routine and I'd like to share some simple tips with you to help you manage lockdown in a gentle way. They can all be implemented within the guidelines laid out.

I hope you enjoy them.

Helen

HELEN'S HOLISTIC SELF CARE PLAN

Easy to implement self care tips

1 A GOOD NIGHTS REST

Nothing beats a good nights sleep. Keeping a regular bedtime helps



2 A NICE LONG SOAK IN THE BATH

When the body is relaxed the mind is too.

3 EATING WELL & EXERCISE

Keep your head clear with a walk every day and eating healthy helps with maintaining wellbeing



4 PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Its good for the mind and soul and the body benefits too.

5 USE THE TIME TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW

I have plenty of time to focus on learning something with free online programmes



Caring for self is an act of self love



Declan

Placement

Soilse

Impact of lockdown

Eating well has gone off track

Fitness routine is suffering

Missing being with family

I had a fairly good routine before lockdown. I had a good food prep routine that served me well through the week. Because I worked out in the gym it was important I ate a balanced diet.

It is not until something is taken away that I realised how important it was to my life. Of course I love my family and friends and not being able to be in close proximity with them, have a hug and pass the time with them became incredibly difficult.

With the whole routine disrupted I felt things were slipping and when I looked I could see the things that are part of my foundation were not as solid as they could be.

I had let thoughts of 'I've loads of time now that I have nowhere to go' or "Sure College won't be back this year, there is no point in doing the work" I got temporary relief from putting things off for a while but it was always in the back of my mind that I wasn't doing what worked for me.

With the uncertainty of when lockdown would open up again feeling like this was weighing heavy, time to implement something that would shift things around.

I have drawn up this plan that helps me keep what is important to me to the fore so that I keep my eating on track, an exercise routine on track and college work on track because those college submission deadlines are still in place!

Declan

DECLAN'S TIPS TO REIGNITE MOTIVATION

Make your wellbeing a priority



1 GET ON YER BIKE

You might be only able to go 2km from home but there is nothing stopping you from doing the same 2km several times.



2 PREP CYCLING EQUIPMENT

Being safe and being seen still is important so take the time to make sure all those reflectors are clean, lamps are working and of course make sure the chain is well oiled.



3 CATCHING UP ON COLLEGE WORK

Use a traffic light system to prioritise the work load.

Green = In time with dead line

Amber = somewhat behind

Red = Way behind and need to catch up immediately



4 WATCH FOR PROCRASTINATION THOUGHTS

Lock down will be over at some stage. I can either be on top of things when it is over or overwhelmed with everything. The college dead lines are still there for submission of work.



5 PIZZA ONLY LOOKS INVITING

Making a meal plan each week keeps the focus on eating well. Eating as healthy as possible is the better choice. 80/20 rule applies.

80% nutritious healthy food helps to balance out the 20% treat food.

**We only have today,
make it count.**



Jackie

Placement

Finglas Addiction Support Team

Impact of lockdown – Missing being with family and friends

Missed my daily routine

Struggled with keeping in touch online

I am someone who is very hands on and who likes to be around others and have face to face contact when having conversations. During this time of Isolation, cocooning and social distancing all my family and friends, like me, are practicing social distancing and isolating within their homes in the community. So visits are not happening.

I am used to a good routine, getting up each morning, having a shower, something to eat and heading to work. Once there I am engaged with others all day and have a fairly structured programme of work in an office environment after which I would then head to my recovery coach placement 3 days a week. On other days I would meet with a friend for lunch or go visit family so my days were always full. With all that gone I noticed I was struggling big time.

So, the next step for me to take was to ask how I could fill some of these gaps to have some sort of social interaction; the answer was the phone, laptop, social media etc. I have found it very difficult to transition to keeping in contact with the outside world through technology. Once behind my own door and unable to connect with people my preferred way, it took me a while to come around to the idea that connection is still important and I had to adjust to this new way of connecting.

I started by phoning friends, colleagues etc. and using zoom for our meetings but yet again I found this difficult to do. I struggled to hold a conversation with others online whether it was through zoom, texting or phone calls. I found it extremely hard to interact in this way and I still do. I always feel a lot better for doing it when I've finished. I still don't really like it but I am making the best of what is available at this time.

It has forced me to work out a new routine that gets me through each day and I look forward to interacting face to face with my family and friends soon.

I am delighted to share with you just how simple it is to structure my day that keeps me looking after myself and in a good space in my head, for most of the day at least.

Jackie

Jackie's Tips

HOW TO SHOW UP DURING LOCKDOWN

SHOW UP

For your own day, washed, dressed and fed well. Looking after yourself is priority. When we get to mix with family and friends again I want to be on top of things.



CONVERSE

While only having contact by phone or online is not the preferred way, it is better than no contact. Make time to reach out to your nearest and dearest as much as you can.

ACT AS IF

If working remotely and checking in online get ready as if you are actually going into the workplace. It makes you feel like you are actually in work and more purposeful.



SELF TALK - CRITIC OR CHEERLEADER?

That voice can either motivate or debilitate so it's important to recognise if the self talk is a critic or a cheerleader.

The cheerleader is the voice that will help get things done.

MEDITATE, CONNECT & AFFIRM

Before starting the day, start with meditation to connect to self, affirm the plan for the day and step into the day fully.



**DON'T LEAVE IT UNTIL
TOMORROW FOR TOMORROW
CAN BECOME I'LL DO IT
SOME DAY.**

Helpful Resources

Health Service Executive Corona Virus Updates

<https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

Covid 19 and drug recovery information

[http://www.drugs.ie/news/article/coronavirus and drug recovery](http://www.drugs.ie/news/article/coronavirus_and_drug_recovery)

Meditations

www.insighttimer.com

Understanding Procrastination

Time Urban – Procrastination Monster - <https://bit.ly/TUProcrastinate>

How to Motivate your self

Mel Robbins The 5 second rule - <https://bit.ly/5secreteMelRobbins>

Communication – video live stream

(Free account 40 mins uninterrupted)

www.Zoom.us